



Grand Slam!

Sunday March 24, 2019

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MUSIC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

This evening's concert follows Esprit's practice of sustaining musical relationships to achieve fine artistic results.

We first performed Chris Thornborrow's music when he was still a university student. Then we commissioned a small-scale piece for our *Ontario Resonance* emerging composer project last season. We've also invited Chris to be a teacher in our *Creative Sparks* mentoring program for high school students. Our commissioning of *Trompe l'oeil* completes the first phase of a promising ongoing relationship between Chris and Esprit.

Our audiences have now heard us perform many of Unsuk Chin's superb orchestral pieces and our programming of her *Cello Concerto* extends the opportunity for listeners to experience her exceptional talent to an even greater depth of understanding and appreciation. It also serves as the perfect virtuosic piece to welcome back cellist Joseph Johnson whose fabulous talent we've wanted to showcase again since he first performed as a soloist with us several years ago.

Finally, the music of Maki Ishii and performance skills of Ryan Scott have made for a marvelous combination in many Esprit concerts over the years. With the *Afro-Concerto* we continue an ongoing, musically rewarding series of concerto performances with Ryan, our principal percussionist, as soloist.

Naturally we have programmed the concert and engaged our artists with the intention of connecting with you as a member of the audience. In essence, your relationship to our musicians is a key ingredient in making the concert meaningful. With pleasure, we are onstage tonight to entice you into a sustained musical relationship with Esprit.



Alex Pauk, C.M.
Founding Music Director

Grand Slam!
ESPRIT ORCHESTRA
ALEX PAUK, Music Director and Conductor

Sunday March 24, 2019 | Koerner Hall

GUEST ARTISTS

Joseph Johnson – Cello
Ryan Scott – Percussion

7:15pm **Pre-Concert Talk**
 Hosted by Alexina Louie

8:00pm **Concert**

PROGRAM

Christopher Thornborrow *Trompe l'œil* (2019)**
(Canada)

Unsuk Chin **Cello Concerto** (2006; rev 2013)*
(Korea) *I. Aniri*
 II.
 III.
 IV.

INTERMISSION

Maki Ishii **Afro-Concerto** (1982)
(Japan)

*Canadian Premiere

**World Premiere commissioned by Esprit with generous support from
Ontario Arts Council

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ESPRIT ORCHESTRA

Alex Pauk, Music Director and Conductor

VIOLIN I

Stephen Sitarski, *concertmaster**

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Corey Gemmell

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Anne Armstrong

Joanna Zabrowarna

Andréa Tyniec

Renee London

VIOLIN II

Bethany Bergman*

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Hiroko Kagawa

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Erica Beston

Laurel Mascarenhas

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VIOLA

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BASS

Hans Preuss*

Rob Wolanski

Michael Cox

FLUTE

Doug Stewart*

Maria Pelletier, *piccolo*

Leslie Newman, *piccolo, alto flute*

OBOE

Clare Scholtz*
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CLARINET

Colleen Cook*
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Richard Thomson

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HORN

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Gary Pattison
Janet Anderson

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Brendan Cassin*
Anita McAlister
Richard Sandals
Michelle Wylie

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David Pell
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Cathy Stone, *bass trombone*

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HARP

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*Denotes Principal Player

ALEX PAUK

Founding Music Director and Conductor

Alex Pauk was inducted into the Order of Canada on September 23rd, 2015. Pauk has revitalized orchestral life for composers across Canada by founding Esprit Orchestra in 1983 and devoting the organization to new music. Through building and sustaining Esprit's high calibre performances, commissioning program, innovative programming (70% Canadian), recordings, outreach projects, national and international tours, and multimedia ventures, Pauk has been a leader in developing and promoting Canadian music at home and abroad.

As a conductor, he attains excellent performances on stage and in recordings. Pauk's commissioning of Canadian composers of all ages and stylistic trends is central to his work. In 2007, Pauk was a recipient of the Canada Council for the Arts Molson Prize, awarded to those who contribute to the cultural and intellectual heritage of Canada. Pauk's commitment to the community through Esprit has also garnered SOCAN and Chalmers Awards, as well as three Lieutenant Governor's Arts Awards. Under Pauk's direction, Esprit was awarded the 2005 Vida Peene Award for excellent standards of performance and programming.

In addition to his work as a conductor, Alex Pauk has a prolific career as a composer, having written music for every kind of performing ensemble. Pauk has composed for and conducted more than sixty works for organizations such as the Société de musique contemporaine du Québec, CBC Vancouver Orchestra, New Music Concerts, Vancouver New Music Society, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and Esprit Orchestra.

Pauk graduated from the University of Toronto Faculty of Music in 1971. He currently resides in Toronto with his wife, Alexina Louie, who is his vital partner in the development of Esprit Orchestra.

STEPHEN SITARSKI

Concertmaster

Stephen Sitarski enjoys an incredibly varied career as a violinist and conductor, and has built an excellent reputation nationally in performances of Baroque music through to jazz and modern. He is also a recognized conductor, adjudicator, music administrator, and teacher. In the contemporary classical music realm, Mr. Sitarski has been on three tours of the United States with Art of Time Ensemble, the last being February 2018 with singer, songwriter, and guitarist Steven Page. He is also a regular member of Toronto New Music Concerts, Arraymusic, and Soundstreams, the last of which included a tour in May 2012 of Taiwan and China, performing works by Tan Dun and R. Murray Schafer.

As a soloist, Mr. Sitarski frequently appears with many concertos in the standard repertoire as well as concertos written especially for him by Canadian composers such as Kelly-Marie Murphy and Glenn Buhr. In April 2019, he will perform Prokofiev's *Violin Concerto No. 2* with the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, where he also serves as Concertmaster. Mr. Sitarski is also Concertmaster of Esprit Orchestra, and held the same position with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony (KWS) for 15 seasons (1997 – 2012). In summer 2018, he served as Concertmaster for the orchestra performing the Mirvish Production of *The King and I*. Stephen has also been guest concertmaster across Canada and abroad.

Mr. Sitarski has also added conducting to his roster of duties, having conducted the Mississauga and Georgian Bay Symphonies. Routinely heard throughout Canada on disc and on live radio broadcasts, Sitarski has also performed countless television and film scores. Stephen has always maintained a hand at mentoring and teaching; he will mark his 15th year on a faculty of the National Youth Orchestra of Canada. In recognition of this, he was previously awarded the Queen's Jubilee Medal, a nomination submitted by the NYOC. In previous years, Stephen taught at Wilfrid Laurier University, the Glenn Gould School of the Royal Conservatory of Music, and the Banff Centre for the Arts.

He is an advocate for the mental and physical health of musicians, and has given talks about the mental strain of a musician's life. He was profiled in the April 2018 edition of The WholeNote magazine.

JOSEPH JOHNSON

Cello Soloist

Joseph Johnson is a soloist, chamber musician and educator. Highlights of the 2018/2019 season include concerto performances of the Brahms *Double Concerto* with Jonathan Crow and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Other concerto appearances include Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations* with the Kingston Symphony as well as the Wisconsin Youth Symphony in Madison, WI, and the North American Premiere of the Unsuk Chin *Cello Concerto* with the Esprit Orchestra.

Principal cellist of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra since the 2009/2010 season, Johnson previously held the same position with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. He also serves as principal cellist of the Santa Fe Opera. Prior to his Milwaukee appointment, Joseph Johnson was a member of The Minnesota Orchestra cello section for eleven years, during which time he performed numerous chamber music works during the orchestra's Sommerfest, both as cellist and pianist. He was a founding member of both the Prospect Park Players and the Minneapolis Quartet, the latter of which was honoured with The McKnight Foundation Award in 2005.

A gifted and inspiring teacher, Mr. Johnson is Assistant Professor of Cello at the University of Toronto, the cello coach for the Toronto Youth Symphony, and regular coach and teacher at the New World Symphony in Miami. He has conducted numerous master classes for a wide range of institutions and ensembles. A graduate of the Eastman School of Music, Joseph Johnson earned his master's degree from Northwestern University. Awards and honours include a performer's certificate from the Eastman School of Music and first prize from the American String Teachers Association National Solo Competition.

Mr. Johnson performs on a magnificent Paolo Castello cello crafted in Genoa in 1780. He uses Jarger Superior brand strings exclusively.

This biography has been abbreviated. For the full biography, visit www.joecello.com

RYAN SCOTT

Percussion Soloist

Leading Canadian percussionist Dr. Ryan Scott has been hailed as “Fierce and delicate...a chameleon-like virtuoso who triumphs over the varied colouristic demands and technical challenges” (*Gramophone*).

As a marimba and multi-percussion soloist he has performed extensively in contemporary music festivals in Europe, Japan, China, Indonesia, South Africa, the UK, and The Netherlands. He has also performed as guest soloist with Esprit Orchestra (this evening’s performance is the tenth time Ryan has appeared as soloist with Esprit), the National Arts Centre Orchestra, The Hyogo Performing Arts Centre Orchestra, The Austin Symphony, and numerous other orchestras and chamber ensembles across North America.

Ryan is a stalwart figure in the Toronto contemporary music community and has performed in over 300 world premieres. In addition to his work as a regular guest artist with NEXUS, Principal Percussionist of the Esprit Orchestra and Percussionist in the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra since 1996, he is also a sought-after chamber musician and teacher. A core member of Continuum Contemporary Music (founded 1985), he also serves the organization as Artistic Director.

Ryan has been featured on over 20 CD recordings and his live recording of three Maki Ishii percussion concertos with the Esprit Orchestra (Innova 809) received international acclaim in 2011. He studied with Russell Hartenberger and Robin Engelman at the University of Toronto and serves on the faculty at the National Youth Orchestra of Canada. Ryan is married to harpist Sanya Eng (also featured in tonight’s concert), and lives in Toronto with their three children.

**CHRISTOPHER
THORNBORROW**
Trompe L'œil (2019)

Composer's Note:

Trompe l'œil is a painting technique used to create the illusion of three dimensions on two dimensional surfaces. Specifically, I was drawn to Carel Fabritius's skillfully crafted painting, *The Goldfinch*, which has gained unusual popularity after being featured in Donna Tartt's novel of the same name.

The painting features a pet finch chained to a feeder box, and creates the illusion that the animal and the box are attached to, and protruding from the wall. What is particularly remarkable is the extraordinary realism achieved in the image using mostly large, simple, bold brushstrokes.

In my piece, several elements pay homage to Fabritius's painting. For example, birdsong features prominently in the motivic material. These tiny, detailed melodies are stacked vertically, often in the winds, to create thick textures, emulating Fabritius's painting technique. As longer melodies progress, they pull apart in pitch through sliding glissandi, as if lifting off

the page, a reference to the 3D nature of the picture.

There is a tragic aspect to Carel Fabritius's story. In what is now known as the Delft Thunderclap, 30 tons of gunpowder exploded and leveled much of the city. Fabritius was killed in this explosion of 1654, the same year he painted *The Goldfinch*. Compounded by the loss of life in this event, we also lost many of Carel's paintings, and the potential for more if he had lived. The final moments of my piece, a goldfinch singing under a subtly discordant lullaby, reflect on the impending tragedy, the fragility of life and of art.

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UNSUK CHIN

Cello Concerto (2006; rev. 2013)

For the four-movement cello concerto, Unsuk Chin was inspired by the unique artistry of Alban Gerhardt. The dedicatee premiered it in 2009 at the London Proms under Ilan Volkov and presented the 2013 version under Kent Nagano in Munich for the first time. *The Guardian* described Chin's work as "the most important cello concerto since Lutoslawski in 1970". The concerto never conceals the soloist despite the large orchestra, exploring the specific lyric qualities of the instrument in spite of the technical difficulty level.

The first movement is titled *Aniri*, named after a term from the Korean pansori theatre. Like the actor of an epic song, the cellist casts a spell over everyone, introduced by barely audible, tender swabs of the two harps. They give the central note which is repeatedly used as an orchestral rallying point throughout the course of the movement, and is picked up by the soloist. As tubular bells and celesta are added, the melodic line of the soloist dissolves ever more freely. With highly differentiated playing techniques such as different levels of harmonics or the impact of varied bow

placements on the string, the spectra between song and noise are explored. Shadowy, the orchestra follows the cello, picking up a rhythmically incisive figure, spreading a seductively glittering field over the soloist's arpeggios and flageolet passages. Nine triangles support the impression of fluttering and floating.

The dreamlike persistence is interrupted by an abrupt detonation, mixing improvisational, feverish flickering impulses of the cello. With their play instruction "as fast as possible" Chin pays tribute to the cello concerto of her teacher György Ligeti.

In the frenetic second movement, the soloist drives the action, supported by the ostinato of the percussion. The strings descend like lightning, playing overtones on the bridge. Unexpectedly in this fast-paced ride, the cello unfolds a melody enriched with artificial overtones, picking up on Chin's original idea of writing a stylized folk song.

In the third movement, the cello spins out a chorale melody, accompanied by the deep strings' static-floating. After a culmination, the strings pick up the chorale.

After these spherical sounds, the orchestra literally beats the soloist in the last movement: hard chords fall upon the cello soloist. Unsuks Chin speaks of "psychological warfare" when describing this aspect of the work. After an explosion of orchestral colours, the cellist takes on a trembling, aggressive figure.

Courtesy of Boosey & Hawkes

MAKI ISHII ***Afro-Concerto (1982)***

As indicated by its title, this concerto was composed under the powerful inspiration of African traditional music. In particular, the magical musical world invoked by incessant repetition. To create a distinctive acoustic space, the percussionists make use of several African hide-covered membranophones and an African keyboard instrument known as the balafon with a simple scale which is thought to be the prototype of the marimba.

The acoustic structure located at the core of this work employs many fragments taken from the traditional music of the Senufo and Pygmy tribes. These fragments are incessantly repeated throughout the work;

their tonal and melodic structures being varied by the soloists and the orchestra as the piece progresses. The content of this concerto is thus closely bound up with non-European and African elements.

This work exists in two versions. Version A was scored for two soloists: marimba and percussion. Version B was scored for a single soloist. The first broadcast performance of the work, which was commissioned by the Nippon Hoso Kyokai Japan Broadcasting Corporation, was given by the NHK Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Hiroyuki Iwaki in August 1982, with the soloists Kazunori Momose (percussion) and Takiko Yamaguchi (marimba). The first concert performance in Version B was given at U-Port in Tokyo in January 1985 by the New Japan Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Michiyoshi Inoue, with the soloist as Sumire Yoshihara.

Courtesy of the Official Website of Maki Ishii

COMPOSER BIOGRAPHIES

CHRISTOPHER THORNBORROW b. 1983

Chris Thornborrow is a Toronto based composer of orchestral music, chamber works, opera, and film-score. His music has been described as “a rumble evocative pleasure” (IndieWire), and “complex and clear, with subtle playfulness” (Ludwig-Van). Chris has been commissioned by numerous ensembles including The Thin Edge New Music Collective, junctQín keyboard collective, Musica Reflecta, Bicycle Opera Project, Soundstreams, and the Array Ensemble. Recognition for his work include the 2013 Karen Kieser Prize in Canadian Music, multiple SOCAN Awards for Young Audio-Visual Composers, and the Toronto Emerging Composer Award Honourable Mention.

Along with Monica Pearce, Chris is the Co-Founder and Artistic Director the Toy Piano Composers. Since 2008, the collective has premiered over 120 new works including chamber pieces, orchestral music, art song, and opera by emerging composers from across Canada. He also

produced the collective’s first album, released in June 2017.

Chris has scored over a dozen short films, many which have screened internationally, including two appearances at the Toronto International Film Festival, The Milano Film Festival, and the Claremont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival in France, as well as broadcasts on Bravo!, CBC, and HBO. With the band Bruce Peninsula, Chris scored *Sleeping Giant*, a film that was featured at Cannes Festival in 2015, and was nominated for best picture at the Canadian Screen Awards.

Lauded as “beautiful, gut-wrenching, and absolutely riveting” (Mooney On Theatre), Chris’s first full-length opera, *Hook Up* (Tapestry Opera), recently premiered at Theatre Passe Muraille. With a libretto by Julie Tepperman and directed by Richard Greenblatt, the piece straddles the worlds of opera and musical theatre, and explores rape culture and consent on university campuses.

As an arts educator, Chris leads a number of programs in the city, including the Canadian Opera Company’s after school opera program and summer

camps, Continuum's composer in the classroom, and Pivoteen. and a number of workshops with Esprit Orchestra. He currently teaches music at Burlington Royal Arts Academy and holds a Doctorate in composition from the University of Toronto.

Biography courtesy of the composer

UNSUK CHIN **b. 1961**

Unsuk Chin has been based in Berlin, Germany since 1988. Her music has attracted international conductors. It is modern in language, but lyrical and non-doctrinaire in communicative power. Chin has received many honours, including the 2004 Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition for her *Violin Concerto*, the 2005 Arnold Schoenberg Prize, the 2010 Prince Pierre Foundation Music Award, and the 2012 Ho-Am Prize.

She has been commissioned by leading performing organizations and her music has been performed in major festivals and concert series by orchestras and ensembles such as the Berlin Philharmonic, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic

Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, and many others.

In 2007, Chin's first opera, *Alice in Wonderland*, was given its World Premiere at the Bavarian State Opera as the opening of the Munich Opera Festival and released on DVD by Unitel Classica. Her second opera, *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, is commissioned by The Royal Opera in London for premiere in their 2018/19 season. Since 2006, Chin has overseen the contemporary music series of the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, a series which she founded herself. Since 2011, she has served as Artistic Director of the 'Music of Today' series of the Philharmonia Orchestra in London. Portrait CDs of her music have appeared on Deutsche Grammophon, Kairos, and Analekta.

Biography courtesy of Boosey & Hawkes

MAKI ISHII **(b. 1936-2003)**

Maki Ishii was born on May 28th, 1936 in Tokyo as the third son of Baku Ishii, the celebrated dancer and

choreographer who played a pioneering role in establishing the genre of modern dance in Japan. After studying composition and conducting from 1952 to 1958 in Tokyo, he moved to Berlin where he continued his studies at the Hochschule für Musik Berlin. In 1969, he was invited back to Berlin by the German Academic Exchange Service to take part in their Berliner Künstlerprogramm.

His compositions have been performed all over the world. Concerts such as *Composer's Portrait of Maki Ishii* have been held in Paris at the Festival d'Automne (1978), at the Berliner Festwochen (1981), in Geneva at the Été Japonais (1983), in Tokyo at the Music Today (1987), at the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra (1990), in The Hague at the Residentie Orchestra (1992), to name a few.

Ishii was Artistic Director of the Chinese-Japanese Contemporary Music Festival in Beijing in 1997. His first opera *Tojirareta Fune (The Sealed Boat)* premiered in Utrecht and Berlin in October 1999. It was given a Japanese premiere at Nissay Theatre in Tokyo in November 2000.

He has conducted many of the world's leading orchestras, including the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the New Japan Philharmonic Orchestra, Radio Symphony Orchestra in Beijing, and the Hong Kong Symphony Orchestra. Particularly successful was his two-act ballet *Kaguyahime*, choreographed by Jiri Kylian for the Nederlands Dans Theater, which he conducted on more than 80 occasions between 1988 and 1995.

Maki Ishii, influenced earlier by the serialism and West European avantgarde techniques of the 1950's and 60's, turned his attention to Japanese traditional music in the late 1960's. The remainder of his creative endeavors have been rooted in the attempt to straddle two musical worlds by employing both European compositional method and elements of Japanese traditional music.

Maki Ishii does not strive merely to set the music and instruments of East and West in opposition to one another, nor even to fuse these two sound worlds, but remains constantly aware of the essential difference that underlies these two musical worlds in an

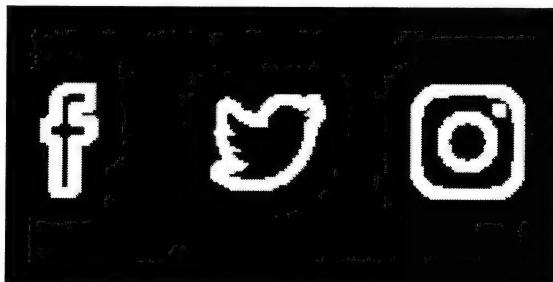
attempt to pursue a third musical vision. Since the 1970's, in an extensive body of works including *Sō-Gu I for shakuhachi and piano* (1970), *Sō-Gu II for gagaku and orchestra* (1972), and *Mono-Prism* for Japanese drums and orchestra (1976), he has succeeded in creating his own unique sound world in which Western and Japanese instruments are used in the same temporal and spatial setting.

Ishii has been the recipient of many awards including the

NHK Symphony Orchestra Otaka prize (1977, Tokyo), the 4th Nakajima Music Grand Prize (1986, Tokyo), the German Critics Prize 1987 (Verband der deutschen Kritiker 1988, Category 'Music'), and the 5th Kyoto Music Award Grand Prize (1990). In 1999, Ishii was decorated with the Medal of Honor with Purple Ribbon by the Emperor of Japan. Maki Ishii died in Tokyo on April 8th, 2003 after a short but severe illness.

Biography courtesy of the Maki Ishii Official Website

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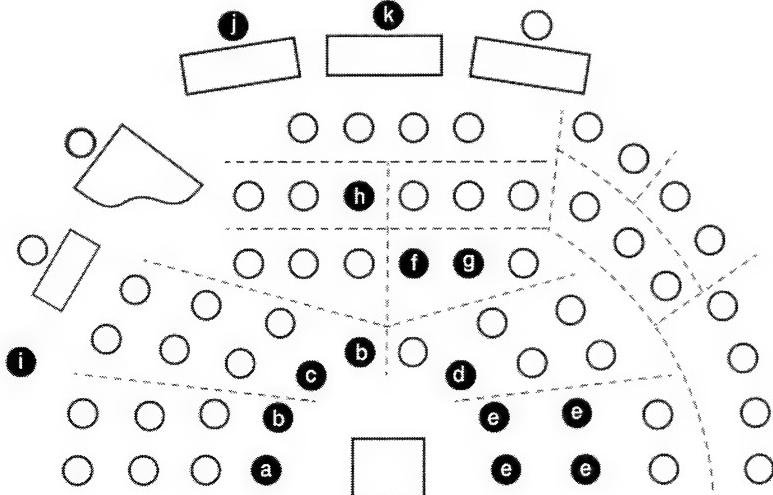
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b)	David Jeong	Section 1 st Violin, Section 2 nd Violin
c)	Jill Taylor & Charles Hazell	Principal 2 nd Violin
d)	Edred Flak	Principal Viola
e)	Barbara Sutherland <i>in memory of John Sutherland</i>	Principal Cello + 3 Section Cellos
f)	Helmut Reichenbächer & John Stanley	Principal Oboe
g)	Ellen Karp & Bill Johnston	Section Oboe
h)	David Sher	Principal Clarinet
i)	Kathleen McMorrow	Principal Harp
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k)	Chantal Perrot	Section Percussion



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Natalie Kuzmich
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Guida Man
Bruce Mather
Robert Mellin
Richard Mercer
Tenny Nigoghossian
Radoslav Ognjenovic
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Manfred Puls
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Deborah Schramek
Ryan Scott & Sanya Eng
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New Wave Reprise

Friday April 5, 2019

Trinity St. Paul's Centre | 427 Bloor St W | 7:00pm

THIS EVENT IS FREE TO SUBSCRIBERS

Keynote

Dialogue of the Wind and Sea: Composers Talking to Composers
An address by renowned Canadian composer and educator, John Rea

Programme (All World Premieres):

Eugene Astapov *Emblem***

Quinn Jacobs *Music About Music***

Christina Volpini *as within, so without***

Bekah Simms *Foreverdark***

Alison Yun-Fei Jiang *Temporal**

Guest Artist Amahl Arulanandam, cello

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ESPRIT ORCHESTRA

511-174 Spadina Ave. Toronto, ON M5T 2C2

416 815 7887

info@espritorchestra.com

espritorchestra.com

